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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/17/2016  
TAGS: PREL UNSC GT VE IT  
SUBJECT: ITALY: FM D'ALEMA CALLS TO EXPLAIN ABSTENTION ON  
UNSC GRULAC SEAT VOTE

REF: A. STATE 173462  
¶B. ROME 427  
¶C. ROME 2593  
¶D. ROME 2810

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Anna M. Borg for reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d).

¶1. (C/NF) Post received NIACCT request (Ref A) on October 17 after learning that Foreign Minister had called the Secretary October 16 to discuss the balloting for the UNSC non-permanent member for Latin America. We understand from Foreign Minister's Policy Advisor and Prime Minister's Diplomatic Advisor that D'Alema called her to explain that Italy's abstention on the first day of voting was due to domestic political concerns given the large number of Italians living in Venezuela. We assume that Secretary delivered the message and points in reftel when she spoke with D'Alema. D'Alema is in Luxembourg October 17. Ambassador will meet with D'Alema October 18 and will follow up with him further on these issues.

¶2. (C/NF) Ambassador met with PM Diplomatic Advisor October 17 and delivered a strong message on the importance of keeping Venezuela off of the UNSC. Ambassador noted Italy's action could affect other issues, such as the GOI's request to be included in Iran talks.

¶3. (C/NF) Comment. Our position was no surprise to Italy (Refs A, B, C). Ambassador, Pol M-C, and Poloffs repeatedly have raised the issue in meetings with the FM, PM's diplomatic advisors, and senior and working level MFA officials. The issue was also an agenda item for visiting A/S Shannon and DAS Volker (September 13) with the GOI. In those conversations, the Italians never suggested the possibility of an abstention. End comment.  
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